



## WHERE THE RAINFOREST MEETS THE OCEAN

### ~ FUTURE MEMORY

I'm standing on the rocks, with my toes in the Pacific Ocean. The sky, having unleashed the *sturm-und-drang* that gives this time of year the nickname "storm season", has opened into a wide, beautiful blue, the kind of cerulean you only see when air is unfettered. The next piece of solid earth in front of me is Japan, several thousand miles away. Between us, a giant, unfathomable expanse of freedom. Underfoot is the far west coast of Vancouver Island, a wondrous tight-knit tangle of sand and wild salal, ancient cedars and land that layers a hundred million years of history in its earth.

I crouch down to feel the stones worn smooth by centuries of ebb and flow on a beach littered with enormous logs that winter waves have flung casually onto the shore. Purple starfish (and orange) are scattered about, along with crimson sheets of seaweed and tangles upon tangles of giant ropes of bull kelp, a virile species that grows up to two feet a day. I feel someone looking at me, though I know there's nobody else nearby. The feeling grows stronger, and I look off to the left, making eye contact with not one, not two, but four sea lions who have climbed aboard a sunny rock for a breather. Their whiskers twitch, asking not "Who are you?" but "What are you?" This is a literal manifestation of what I feel here: the environment demands a response. There is no way to remain indifferent – to the landscape and ultimately, to your own inner thoughts. Be aware, and be grateful: this is a place of inspiration...and of transformation.

I walk along pathways that recall my childhood vision of J.R.R. Tolkien's world, or maybe J.K. Rowling's. Hemlocks grown horizontal from centuries of wind intertwine with firs and pines that look remarkably like candelabras. The earth is soft beneath my feet, the perfume of cedar blissful. These pathways, while leading from one area to another, follow trails that nature has tunneled through the woods; not paved, not clear-cut for efficiency, they are designed for savouring. At a time when technology, gadgets and instant demands leave us breathless and yearning, this place can teach us how to breathe. Just breathe.

*Jennifer Carlisle, guest, 2010*